

Cyngor Tref Llanwrtyd Town Council – Minutes of Special Meeting

Minutes of Special Meeting held on November 14th 2011 at 7pm in the Council Chamber.

Present - Cllrs Prichard, Newman, B Jones, A Jones, James, Burton, Thomas and Van-Rees

In attendance – Mrs Pat Dryden

Apologies for Absence – Cllrs Price and Rowlands

Cllr Prichard opened the meeting and thanked members for attending. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed communication mast to be erected by Network Rail (NR), and the objections of some residents to the proposal.

It was confirmed that in January the TC received a letter from NR saying a mast would be erected along with a map showing the proposed site. That letter clearly stated that NR had Permitted Development Rights, that they were going to write to Kirsty Williams AM and Roger Williams MP and that they would write to local residents to inform them of their plans. The letter was presented under correspondence at the February meeting and Cllr Van-Rees confirmed at that meeting that NR did not need planning permission. Nothing more was heard until early October when an email was received from Bernice Benton asking if we knew anything about a mast.

Three public meetings have so far been held locally, one in Cilmery and two in Garth. Cllr Van-Rees had attended them all, and Cllrs Prichard and Newman had attended the last one held at Garth. It was noted that about 50 people had been present from Garth, Cilmery and Llanwrtyd, and at that meeting Kirsty Williams AM outlined TAN19, a loophole whereby PCC could apply to the Welsh Government to suspend Permitted Development Rights. This would mean NR would have to apply for planning permission, and would give communities time to formulate an appeal. It was however noted that out of 1,400 communities where masts have been erected only 100 communities have complained.

Various press releases were circulated; one saying that there is more danger from low energy bulbs, mobile phones, and medical equipment such as MRI scanners than from these radio masts. There was a report that a study has taken place in Scandinavia concluding that there is no harm from masts like these.

There was concern about the petition that has been circulated, some people had admitted that they had not read the petition before signing, people being advised that they can enter someone else's name, children signing and one younger person signing 4 different petition forms.

NR has agreed to meet with one representative from each location on November 24th. NR did attend the public meeting in Cilmery but have declined to attend others.

Mrs Benton, on behalf of the action group, had requested an urgent open meeting. Four member of this group have been invited to meet with members at 6.30pm on November 16th.

The clerk had been copied into emails from Mrs Benton to Cllr David Price thanking him for arranging another public meeting in Cilmery scheduled for November 17th, and stating that 'they're not allowing a public meeting in Llanwrtyd', when an email from the clerk on 11/11/2011 to Mrs Benton clearly stated 'once members have had their meeting with your representatives, then they will decide whether a public meeting is needed. If they do decide that a public meeting is needed,

then it will be arranged and residents will be made aware in the usual way, i.e. posters, on the website and in Grapevine’.

A report had been received about derogatory comments made about members of the TC at a residents meeting that took place on the afternoon of November 4th. The meeting of about 10 people was held in the Residents Lounge at the Neuadd Arms, and comments included implications that Cllr Van-Rees had prior inside information about the mast and would gain personally from its installation, that Grapevine is run by the TC when it is completely independent, and that members do not give two hoots about the community and are only councillors for their own gain. Members felt that if the action group wanted TC support, then events and comments like these were counterproductive.

Members had been approached by local people who are concerned that because of the protest about the erection of the mast, NR might consider closing the Heart of Wales line. It was considered a positive move that NR want to invest money in making the line safer, however all this opposition might have a long term negative effect. Cllr A Jones is to contact HOWLTA to ask their views.

There was a discussion about the masts, and what alternatives there might be. There are shorter masts, but there would have to be more of them, and a system that doesn’t use masts at all. The system chosen by NR is the cheapest, and members concluded that, rather than objecting to the mast being erected, it might have been better to ask NR to reconsider and use another method.

The TC has to consider the community as a whole, and recognised that there had been incidents on the line previously and certainly at least one fatality, therefore it was concluded that a letter could go from the TC to NR saying the following:

- *NR has failed the community by not keeping to its word in the letter of January 20th where it clearly stated they ‘would be writing to residents who live in close proximity to any of their sites’.*
- *They have treated local residents shabbily, and have created a huge rift in the community with its underhand tactics.*
- *They have not fully explained about the system, and have completely ignored residents’ concerns.*
- *Whilst we appreciate that a safety system needs to be in place, we understand there are alternatives and would request that NR consider replacing their proposed system with something more acceptable to the community.*

Signed

Date

Pat Dryden
16/11/2011